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ABSTRACT

Rebecca Caudill, born in 1899 in Poor Fork (now Cumberland), Kentucky, lived until 1985 and devoted a major portion of her life to writing young adult and children's literature. With one exception, Caudill's books, numbering 17, are all set in Appalachia, each one portraying something of the life, the milieu, and the richness of the mountain culture and its people. This paper considers Rebecca Caudill's life and her writing. The novels discussed in the paper are: "Tree of Freedom," "The Far-Off Land," "Susan Cornish," and "Barrie and Daughter." Also discussed is her memoir, "My Appalachia." The paper explores what it calls "the wealth of Caudill's contributions to authentic voicing of Appalachian culture." Caudill uses the mountain variety of English, the foods, activities, and elements of nature native to Appalachia for her comprehensive expose of this region. And, in two of her novels, "Susan Cornish" and "Barrie and Daughter," the theme of education dominates the narratives. (NKA)

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by Mary Warner

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The Contributions of Rebecca Caudill and Dorothy Hoobler

To Appalachian Literature for Young Adults

By Mary Warner
Assistant Professor of English/Director of English Education
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC

Note: This paper was presented at the Youngstown State University Young Adult Literature Festival, May, 1998.
See also Mary Warner's Teaching Guide for *A Far-Off Land* by Rebecca Caudill and *The Trail on Which They Wept* by Dorothy Hoobler

Rebecca Caudill, born in 1899 in Poor Fork, now Cumberland, Kentucky, lived until 1985 and devoted a major portion of her life to writing young adult and children's literature. With the exception of *Wind, Sand and Sky*, a book of Haiku of the Arizona desert, Caudill's books, numbering seventeen, are all set in Appalachia, each portraying something of the life, the milieu, and the richness of the mountain culture and its people. During a lecture called "The High Cost of Writing," given in 1963 to students and faculty of Southeast Community College in Cumberland, Kentucky, Rebecca Caudill emphasized that "what life has said to an individual is the only thing he has to write about that is worth writing about" (12). Her life in Appalachia spoke consistently to her of the joys and anguishes of the mountain experience, and her four young adult novels comprehensively convey many motifs "worth writing about." Caudill's *Tree of Freedom, The Far-off Land, Barrie and Daughter,* and *Susan Cornish* capture four major characteristics of Appalachian culture, each worth writing about and each worth examining more thoroughly in the waning years of Appalachian culture. The first quality is kindness, which encompasses tolerance of others and hospitality. The second is a kind of freedom which implies independence, self-confidence, and the pride that supports necessary and authentic self-esteem. Third, Caudill consistently emphasizes, specifically in her strong female protagonists, a moral code of integrity. The fourth quality is the importance of education, the emphasis that marked Caudill's heritage from her parents who were teachers and was confirmed in her return to Appalachia later in her life.

Many of Caudill's novels are loosely autobiographical; her memoir, *My Appalachia*, delineates the positives and negatives aspects of mountain culture:

> Most important were the people, unhurried, kind, independent, determined, with big families and close and loyal family ties. Money was of no importance in the life of anyone I knew. If a man was sick, womenfolks helped nurse him to health, while the menfolks tended to his planting, his plowing, his harvesting. A man was judged by what he was, never by what he had. Doors in the houses of my Appalachia were never locked against friend or stranger. The people found their pleasures in the simple things of life. They possessed a kind of profound wisdom, characteristic of those who live close to Nature, who walk in step with Nature's rhythm, and who depend on Nature for life itself. (*My Appalachia* 28, 31)

This rich description summarized Caudill's memories of her early years in Appalachia. As she moved away from the region for graduate work, and eventually settled in Urbana, Illinois, Caudill did not experience firsthand the early years of the coal mining exploitation of her Appalachia nor many of the negatives which affected Appalachian life. In the 60's, she and her husband, James Ayars, visited the

region, interviewing people from a range of occupations and involvements in the area, including Dr. W. D. Weatherford. These interviews challenged Caudill to realize the problems that dominated her homeland. Weatherford, who had lived most of his ninety years in the mountains of North Carolina, who had been a teacher, Methodist minister, Y.M.C.A. official, and vice-president of Berea College, spoke of the three major problems he saw in Appalachia. "The problem that gives us the most trouble, because a lot of other things depend on it, is the economic problem... If you don't have money, you can't have schools, you can't have churches, you can't even have decent homes. I don't think it's the most important problem, but it's basic" (*My Appalachia* 62). In defining the economic problem, Weatherford spoke of state governments sitting by as "the big boys" came into Kentucky and through the coal industry literally stripped land and people; in North Carolina, it was the timber industry; and in Georgia, it was various things. (*My Appalachia* 62).

Weatherford saw the second problem as ignorance. His statistics from the 1960s suggest that average educational level in the region was "7.2 years" (*My Appalachia* 64). The third major problem in the mountains Weatherford described as "a big one, one of the very big ones," stating, "We've got no sense of community responsibility" (64). Though the one-room school could encourage a sense of community response, the small farms of the mountains did not require the kind of organization that would draw people together. Once the economic conditions forced a dependency on county, state or national funding and programs, a sense of individual pride and self-esteem was lost; thus as the land was sapped of resources, the people of Appalachia were equally sapped of life.

All of these realities have informed the writings of Rebecca Caudill and make her ripe for rediscovery as a voice authentically portraying the mountain culture. This portrayal of Appalachian culture, marked specifically by kindness which signals acceptance of others and hospitality towards them, freedom with self-confidence and pride, a moral code of integrity, and an emphasis on the importance of education, is a portrayal apt to contemporary young adult readers who can meet, in Caudill's characters, authentic role models.

Two of Caudill's four young adult novels are historical and consistently highlight the characteristic of freedom. *Tree of Freedom* and *The Far-Off Land* are set in the late 1700's and focus primarily on the westward movement of Scots-Irish to Kentucky and beyond the Appalachians. *Tree of Freedom,* which begins in 1780, chronicles the move of the Venable family, and the many others seeking the rich, then unclaimed land in Kentucky. This land rush creates one of the major conflicts in the novel: men devoting their energies to obtaining land instead of fighting with the beleaguered troops of the Continental army. Noel Venable, the fifteen-year-old eldest son who is too steeped in his maternal Tidewater heritage and idealism to be eager about his father's persistent drive Westward, voices the concern about owning land without the freedom of independence:

> "Folks are too busy scandalizin' the Continental Congress," he said. "They're all tryin' to get their hands on hard Spanish money. They're grabbin' up Kentucky land while it's cheap, but doin' precious little to keep it free. Folks are too blind, Steffy, and too scared. They're a little hexed, a lot of 'em are. And not one in a hundred of 'em, I reckon, has ever thought what it'd be like if we win our chance. Or for that matter, if we lose it." (*Tree of Freedom* 83)

Noel is the only one in the Venable family who has learned how to read, though later in the novel, Stephanie, Noel's confidant and supportive sister, will learn, and she vows to become a teacher once communities have grown up around the land her family claimed. Caudill's sense of the importance of education is evident specifically in Noel's and Stephanie's treasuring of books and reading. Noel's ability to read eventually saves his family as he can determine the unscrupulosity of the land swindlers.

Stephanie Venable, age 13, is the female protagonist of *Tree of Freedom*, who serves as the mediator between her father and Noel, who consistently holds the family together, and exemplifies each of the four characteristics that dominate Caudill's works. The aspect of freedom is evident first in Stephanie's selection of the item she'll take with her from the family's North Carolina home into the wilderness.

> In the smokehouse she broke the cobwebs that sealed a warped old calabash. Reaching her fingers inside, she took one solitary apple seed of the many Bertha [her mother] had saved, and dropped in into the deerskin pouch that hung about her waist, tracing in her mind as she did so the long, strange journey of the apples through which the seed had come. Bertha's Back Country tree had grown from seed she had saved from an apple that grew on Grandmammy Linney's tree in Charleston. And Grandmammy Linney, when she was thirteen-year-old Marguerite de Monchard, had brought her seed from an apple that grew in the yard of her old home in France. The Trees of St. Jean de Maurienne, they were called, for the little French village from which Grandmammy came. Stephanie, hurrying back to the house, decided to keep her reasons for planting the seed a secret from every living soul but Noel. He would understand them, she knew, because they were akin to the notion he was carrying in his head as he set out for the wilderness of Kentucky. (*Tree of Freedom* 25)

In this novel, Caudill reveals the Appalachian culture against the backdrop of freedom. She weaves several conflicts, again with contemporary echoes: families against untamed wilderness; a father, Jonathan Venable, against his torturous past that drives his pragmatic, relentless pursuit of Kentucky farmland and independence; the same father against his idealistic son (Noel selects for his one item to take on the journey, the dulcimer he'd learned to play while in Charleston when staying with his great-uncle Lucien, even though it means carrying the dulcimer on his back into Kentucky); land grabbers and swindlers against those like the Venables who have planted corn on the land as part of their claim; frustrated patriots against colonists disgruntled by the British dominance in these early years of the American Revolution; George Washington, George Rogers Clark, Francis Marion and other leaders against the unwilling colonists who continue to slump in their commitment to liberty; and a cast of individual characters like Lonesome Tilly facing inner conflicts.

Lonesome Tilly has the claim next to the Venables' land. Tilly is a loner; some describe him as "hexed." Caudill uses the character of Tilly to voice several moral imperatives about human relationships. As Stephanie and Noel discuss the cause of people being hexed, they discover each person has this potential.

> "Know what Uncle Lucien says?" asked Noel. "He says it's bein' afraid that makes people hexed, that makes 'em lose their bearin's. Everybody that's afraid's a little bit hexed, 'cause he's lost his bearin's just so much." (*Tree of Freedom* 75)

When Stephanie asks Noel if he's afraid of meeting Lonesome Tilly, Noel continues his insightful response. "Shucks, naw, Steffy. The more hexed a man is, if he ain't plumb daft, the more he hankers for a little human kindness. If ever you meet up with him, just say 'Howdy' natural like. Don't run away from him" (*Tree of Freedom* 76). Caudill uses the concept of a person being "hexed"; again contemporary readers can find parallels in the modern reaction to people who are "different."

A final significant theme from *Tree of Freedom* highlights the cost of freedom. Stephanie reiterates in her explanation to younger brother, Willie, that a tree of freedom is one "that grows sometimes sweet apples, sometimes bitter ones" (*T of F* 91). She learns as well that her efforts to secure freedom do not have to entail physically joining the Revolutionary War. Noel reminds her, "Servin' your country's

mostly honest work... And thinkin' ahead. You're doin' your share to found new settlement in America, only you want to be on your guard like the de Monchards, not to make any deal with slavery of any sort. There's lots of slavery, Steffy, besides that you find in a black skin" (*T of F* 142).

The Far-Off Land, the second historical novel, even more emphatically develops the moral imperative of acceptance of all human beings, particularly of Native Americans. This novel can be studied in tandem with Dorothy Hoobler's *The Trail on Which They Wept.* The Study Guide for *A Far-Off Land* by Rebecca Caudill and *The Trail on Which They Wept* by Dorothy Hoobler (forthcoming in this website) provides indicates how Hoobler's novel voicing a young Cherokee woman's experience during the Trail of Tears can be paired with Caudill's *The Far-Off Land.*

When the novel opens, it's 1780. Ketturn Petrie, the novel's protagonist, has been raised for eight years of her life by the Moravians, living in Salem, North Carolina. Anson Petrie, Ketty's only living sibling whom she has not seen in over fourteen years, has discovered that his sister is with the Moravians. Anson does not know that after he left his North Carolina home in 1764, following the allure of those pioneering into Kentucky, his parents and five of his six siblings died. As Ketty reveals the sad saga, she tells her brother how their mother treated every person as one of her own children.

> "You'd think, Anson, that when Mother had parted with six of her children, five deep in their bury holes and one gone off in silence, she'd have parted with her senses too. But it seems like sorrow only tendered her heart till she looked on all people as her children. She never turned anybody away from our door hungry--Tories nor ragged militia nor Indians. Whoever tramped by asking for a bite of hoecake, Mother invited him to come in and sit at the table proper and eat. And she served every man of them just as if he had been you come home at last." (*The Far-Off Land* 26)

Anson cannot believe that his mother would have treated "red men, skulking thieving red men," as he describes them, with such kindness. This very kindness proved to be the shield that protected Ketty and her mother in every circumstance. In the face of Anson's driving question, "And the red men--they never harmed you?", Ketty answers, "They did mischief some places. They stole horses and killed cattle and robbed corn patches of roasting ears. But they never harmed us" (*The Far-Off Land* 27).

Ketty takes her Moravian training in acceptance and this sense of hospitality for all, along with Moravian Sister Oesterlein's advice, on the pioneer journey with her brother, his family and two other families traveling with them. As Ketty prepares to leave the Moravian community, Sister Oesterlein counsels Ketty to "be present" and "be reverent" (35) in all dealings with others, and once again Caudill establishes the motif of moral integrity and hospitality toward others.

> "By loving people, Ketty, you will come to understand their needs. By loving and caring about people--all people. See people as we Moravians see them--not as friends or enemies, but as people, red people and black people as well as white, Tories as well as patriots, the gentleman's slave as well as the gentleman. If love goes with you through the wilderness, Ketty, you needn't be afraid. There isn't any evil in the world that won't give ground before a loving woman." (*The Far-Off Land* 35)

This advice given by Sister Oesterlein underlies all of the conflicts Ketty and her companion pioneers encounter. This novel is filled with the tensions of Anglo settlers invading the lands and lives of Native Americans; of the dangers of mountain travels, untamed rivers fraught with shoals, sawyers, "the Suck" and "the Boiling Pot"; of the overwhelming fears experienced by Farrer, the young boy who witnessed his parents being scalped; and the fierce persistence of Ketty not to surrender her ideals of treating all

people with kindness despite the relentless insistence of Anson that his sister learn to shoot "red men." The "Far-Off Land" suggested by the book's title symbolizes the universal of many different searchings. As Ketty muses, "people are always trying to find some far-off land--leaving behind the fields they've tended and the friends they love and crossing ocean seas and climbing high mountains to get to it. How are we to know when we get to the French Lick if it's the far-off land we're looking for?" (53)

At the point when Ketty and Anson were reunited, she learned that Anson was married and had two children; Ketty was particularly troubled to learn, though, that Anson's wife and children could not read. Feeling somewhat useless on the initial day of their river journey into the wilderness, she decides to teach the six children on board how to read. Ingeniously she creates slates from birch bark and writing utensils from charred sticks. One of Ketty's major ways of "being present," fulfilling her admonition from Sister Oesterlein, is to teach, entertain, and divert the children during their river route into the wilderness.

The Petrie party is eventually joined by George Soelle, a surveyor. Soelle lends the male voice of reason to the feverish land-driven Anson and his two male counterparts, Baptist and Shubeal. Soelle also serves as moral support for Ketty. In one conversation following Anson and Baptist's bragging about an early Indian raid, when they thought they'd successfully demolished the Native American settlements along part of the river, Ketty expresses her anguish: "Why won't white men listen to reason?" (142) George's words again articulate the challenge of moral integrity:

> "Because they're land-greedy... They're always pushing west, and in the same way. First one ventures out, a hunter or a trapper. Then other hunters come. They like the lay of the land, so they decide to fetch their families and settle. They cut down trees that shelter the wild game, and plant corn. Their neighbors follow and take up claims of their own. And nobody says by-your-leave to the red men. Usually by the time the red men are roused up enough to protest, the white men have moved in in sufficient numbers to raise an army and drive the red men farther back. If they don't win the first ground, they win the second. Then they call on the government, which they've left far behind to back them up, to make lawful what they've taken at rifle point. So the government draws up a treaty saying how much land the red men must cede and sends out a few bigwigs to parley with their chiefs. Sometimes the government goes through the motions of paying for the land, if you can call gunpowder and trinkets fair pay. (142-3)

From this point in the novel, the parallels with Dorothy Hoobler's *The Trail on Which They Wept* are all too clear, and the pairing of texts provides a rich thematic unit about the treatment of Native Americans in the century the United States was settled. (See Study Guide, forthcoming in this web site.)

Caudill had learned from her father (both Caudill's parents were teachers), "What you carry in your head, nobody can take from you" (*My Appalachia,* 28), and the theme of education dominates her other two young adult novels: *Susan Cornish* and *Barrie and Daughter*. *Barrie and Daughter* was Caudill's first novel. The book, set in the early twentieth century, highlights more of the Appalachia Caudill experienced in her childhood. Caudill's father, like Peter Barrie in the novel, was a Democrat in eastern Kentucky, which, like most of the Appalachian sections of the Southern states, was overwhelmingly Republican. Caudill saw her mother's tears and distress on Election Day, a day Caudill describes "of drinking, quarreling, shooting, feuding, and generally disturbing the peace" (*My Appalachia* 2). In *Barrie and Daughter* the Election Day scene causes Blanche, Peter's wife, even more agony than it brought Caudill's mother since in the novel Peter Barrie has not only taken an unpopular political position, he has challenged the Scollard brothers' lack of moral integrity.

Peter, and his daughter Fern, who are described by Blanche as being gifted with the sense to "distinguish clearly and quickly between what they considered right and wrong, and never to allow the sun to go down on action undecided" (*Barrie and Daughter* 41), decide to open a store, despite the fact that the Scollard brothers operate the only other store in the valley, and the Scollards live adjacent to the Barries. It is Peter's driving sense of justice and integrity, though, that causes him to open a store where the people of the valley will not be cheated. While the usual life choices for women, as Blanche so firmly cautions the novel's protagonist Fern, are marriage and keeping the home or school teaching, Fern eagerly wants to become her father's partner in the store. Peter has shared his idealistic plan with Fern and counsels her:

> "A good store not only furnishes people with what they need. It can make them want better things than they have. It can help them live more comfortably than they do live. It can give them more satisfying things to work with, and prettier things to look at while they work. If it does that for people without robbing them, then you're right--it is a thing big enough to spend your life doing." (*Barrie and Daughter* 44)

The key sentiments in Peter's counsel are the goals of the good store helping people live more comfortably than they do and giving people more satisfying things with which to work. Clearly too, there is the aesthetic component, "prettier things to look at while they work"; each of these goals addresses the needs of the community and through another venue, offers hospitality.

Throughout the novel, Fern faces ridicule for being a woman storekeeper. In the face of mountain politics she's told by her future fiancé, Clint Stacey, "Politics in these mountains is stronger than any passel of facts you can quote to people. And you've got to be ready for lean and dangerous times when people get busy at their politics and just naturally don't know and don't care if their smokehouses are full or empty" (*B. and D.* 112). At the same time, Clint remains her staunch supporter since he, too, wants to do something less than typical in his mountain community. When he shares with Fern his dreams of becoming a doctor, he emphasizes, "But it takes a lot of courage, Fern, doesn't it, to do a thing everybody says you can't do, or that's just a waste of time to do?" (*B. and D.* 228). Clint's plans to be a doctor have grown specifically from his experience in the mountain community where homegrown remedies have dominated medical treatment. With no disparagement to the natural wisdom of the mountain people, Clint knows that the white swelling Fern's brother Tom had in his leg, when he was four, could have been treated differently. If it had, Tom, age fifteen at the novel's opening, would not need to face all of life hampered by crutches.

Barrie and Daughter delves deeply into the moral fiber of honesty and drive to live by principle that the best of the mountain culture nourishes despite the prevalence of violence. The Scollards, primarily driven by the greed and corruption of John Scollard, attempt a series of sabotages of the Barries' attempt to provide a store that fosters honest trade. Again Peter's wisdom provides both shield and goad for Fern's courageous actions. Peter says in the face of John Scollard's violent action, "'There may be other knives, daughter... You and I'll never own one. That ain't according to our way. But we won't run from them either. There are some things a knife can't cut'" (*B and D* 51).

In her decision to join her father's venture and to persevere in the face of the demoralizing actions of the Scollards, Fern emerges as a courageous and ethical woman. Her father reflects, "She was going to be something far more splendid that the mere keeper of the storehouse...far grander than a mere trader in food and clothing and shelter. She was going to be a mighty fighter on the side of the people" (*B and D* 52).

A quieter figure of the novel, Peter's wife Blanche, has to adjust continually to the Quixotic visions of

her husband and his plans for their daughter, Fern. Blanche, no doubt created loosely with Caudill's own mother in mind, is tempered by the realism of election year vigilantism, but does not fear for her own safety. In her words to Peter, who has shared his plans for starting a store in the valley that will inevitably bring conflict with the Scollards and all they are able to influence, she conveys "an old, old weariness": "Nobody's a going to hurt me. Nobody's a going to hurt a woman willfully" (*B and D* 68). For Fern, who has struggled to understand her mother's stoic drive and tireless work ethic, a new understanding arises.

> Chivalry toward women was part of the mountain code, in feuds as well as in friendships. Women were never harmed. But more than one woman in the valley was widowed, Fern realized, and in more than one home children were fatherless because a man had seen fit to meddle in a neighbor's affairs, by criticizing or calling names or making dares and threats. Yet what such men had done was nothing compared to what her father proposed to do. (*B and D* 68-9)

Blanche is also a champion of education, one of the qualities of mountain culture which Caudill weaves throughout each of the novels: "'I'd as soon a child of mine would be dishonest as to grow up without book learning'" (*B and D* 94). This conviction Blanche shares with her husband and with those who seek the best in mountain culture. Peter's strong moral convictions are likewise grounded in education. The Democrat Peter wishes to support in the elections has not been entirely fair and honest in the means he has chosen to right a wrong. In this dilemma, Peter responds:

> "And I don't care how bad a thing needs correcting, if you can't come out and correct it in the open, then the medicine's just as poisonous as the disease. It takes education, daughter, to change a thing. Education. And education's a slow thing. But it's an honest thing, and when it gains ground with a point it's trying to make, it can just about hold that ground against anybody" (*B and D* 233).

Susan Cornish is Caudill's novel whose main conflict arises from the issue of education. The novel presents Caudill's strongest challenge to the moral and economic torpor affecting the people of Pickwick Mill, a community easily identifiable as representative of the broader Appalachian region. Susan, the novel's protagonist, has chosen in her junior year not to return to the college her parents have selected; the college's narrow perspective on learning cannot satisfy her far-reaching questions.

> "Can't you see what I'm talking about, Daddy?... I wish I could make you understand that--that something inside me is always asking questions and driving me to find answers. I can't help it if they're hard questions, or if they're questions you're ashamed to ask. Like, 'What is God?' and, 'Are all men really created equal?' and, "Is white a superior color to black?' The thing that matters is that they're honest questions. But nobody has ever faced my questions with me squarely." (*Susan Cornish* 13)

Her refusal to return to college precipitates her need for a job, and at eighteen, Susan obtains a teaching position, deciding "to find out if a teacher could be to a child what she had wanted her teachers to be to her" (*Susan Cornish* 15).

Her challenges in Pickwick Mill are monumental: the land is eroded; wealthy landowners like Sam Goad, who has given Susan her position, can remove their tenant farmers at whim and pay their poll tax so the tenants vote as the "boss" wants; families are dissatisfied with the school and are unmotivated to do anything for its improvement. Susan is told, "The old settlers did work together and play together. But together they wasted the wonderful loamy flesh of this elbow of land right down to the rocky bone.

They bequeathed a lot of gully-washed farms to their children, and gully-washed farms won't nourish a community" (*Susan Cornish* 57).

Added to these harsh realities, Susan learns quickly "that the essence of good teaching was more than prodding children through textbooks. It was guiding and companioning children in the realms into which their textbooks led. Teaching was more than knowing the answers. It was being the answers, deep within herself, to all the questions..." (*Susan Cornish* 21).

County Superintendent Lawrence McAdam recognizes in Susan the honest searching, tireless drive, and integrity that will make up for any inadequacies. He, and several other supporters, provide the backdrop for her idealism. Even when Susan feels as the speaker in Milton's "Lycidas" that "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed," she is able to awaken a new kind of energy in the community. Caudill creates in the novel, as she has in the other young adult novels, fictional characters who clearly achieve the answers to each of the three major problems dominating post-l940's Appalachia: economic, lack of education and lack of community responsibility. As the school at Pickwick Mill is rejuvenated, the community reunites in the "coming together of people who had long gone their separate ways" (*S C* 101).

This novel identifies the roots of that which can most erode the ideals in mountain communities. Susan examines the roots in a conversation with Superintendent McAdam:

> "I want to go beyond teaching my children how to read and spell and multiply... I know these skills are necessary tools. But as far as I have been able to work things out, the chief business of teaching, after helping the children learn is to--is to sick them on some deep yearning--the way you train a hound and then sick him on a fox. Maybe, Mr. McAdam, I'm just an ignorant girl playing around with impossibly big ideas, but I do have a goal. I want these children to make over Pickwick Mill into a living community, a place alive with vigor and hope, where people work together and play together and worship together the way they did in the old days." (*SC* 56-7)

Susan's efforts to renew the community are slow and frequently thwarted; her experience in facing the blight that saps the community is not a new one nor is it is unique to mid-twentieth century. She is told "The physical and the spiritual erosion in Pickwick Mill didn't take place overnight, and overnight you aren't going to rebuild what has been wasted" (*SC* 59). Caudill has created a story of a woman who does assume the challenge; the novel reveals a cast of characters true to mountain life and equally true to the spirit of renewal that can triumph over torpor.

None of these brief analyses can do justice to the wealth of Rebecca Caudill's contributions to authentic voicing of Appalachian culture. In addition to the creation of characters and conflicts so true to Appalachia, Caudill uses the mountain variety of English, the foods, activities, and elements of nature native to Appalachia for her comprehensive expose` of this region. Her writings serve the mountain people well, but her works also speaks to the universals in human experience, thus appealing to contemporary audiences from regions well beyond Appalachia. Her character of Lawrence McAdam, the county superintendent in *Susan Cornish* identifies the human characteristics that apply to any region in any age.

> "Honesty and truth and the other living essentials get so shoved around in this world, so mixed with mean little sordid little half-truths and with sheer triviality. Truth is so prostituted in most of our lives." (61)

It is another character, though, from *Susan Cornish*, Frank Burch, who indicates why the best of any region or people will ultimately triumph. And here we understand why the works of Caudill need to be rediscovered. As Burch puts it, "By speaking the truth in love...There isn't any meanness in the world that can stand up against the truth spoken in love" (180).

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